

What Does it Mean to Be Kind to Yourself?

Why be kind to yourself? Self-kindness is particularly important for grieving parents and caregivers who are going through a difficult and painful time. Grief is hard enough as it is, but many parents say unkind things to themselves, which makes them feel even worse.

What is self-kindness? Self-kindness is recognizing when you are hurting and bringing the healing power of kindness to painful experiences. It is not about ignoring your feelings, trying to change them, or trying to escape them. It's about bringing care and concern to whatever you are feeling.

Self-kindness is treating yourself as you would a good friend who is hurting. While most of us are good at showing kindness to others, we don't always show it to ourselves. Self-kindness is about giving yourself the same kindness and support you would give to a loved one or close friend who is having a difficult time.

Myths about self-kindness can get in the way. You have the ability to be kind to yourself, but self-kindness myths may get in the way. Here are some of these myths. Do any of these feel familiar?

Breaking the Myths About Self-Kindness

Myth About Self-Kindness	Truth About Self-Kindness
Other people can handle this better than I can. I don't deserve kindness.	You are doing the best you can. Everyone handles things in their own way and everyone can benefit from being kind to themselves.
It is selfish or self-indulgent.	It is something that everyone deserves. You are not alone in needing kindness when you are having a hard time.
It is just an excuse to be lazy.	It actually gives you the energy to do the things that are important to you. When you realize you are hurting, you can take steps to soften the pain.
It is fake or phony.	It may feel new and uncomfortable, but offering self-kindness becomes easier as you continue to do it.
It is weak.	It actually takes work! Being kind to yourself when you are hurting helps make you stronger.
I won't make positive changes if I'm kind to myself.	Actually, being kind to yourself gives you the energy to do the things that are important to you.



Resilient Parenting

FOR BEREAVED FAMILIES



Being kind to yourself takes practice. For many people being kind to themselves is new. Like anything that is new, it takes practice to feel comfortable with it. Check out the Resources Page for the following resources that can help you start practicing self-kindness:

- » Guided self-compassion meditations from experts in the field
- » Writing Exercise for Self-Kindness
- » Four Steps to Kinder Thoughts When You are Feeling Badly
- » Taking Action to Be Kind to Yourself
- » Also, check out the bookshelf for additional helpful readings, articles and meditation practices

© 2020 Arizona State University, All Rights Reserved